



**CALIFORNIA  
HIGH-SPEED RAIL  
AUTHORITY**

**TO: Chairman Pringle and Authority Board Members**

**FROM: Carrie L. Bowen, Deputy Director**

**DATE: November 30, 2009**

**RE: Alternative Analysis Update Merced to Fresno to Section  
Agenda Item 12(B)**

The purpose of this agenda item is to summarize the results of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) staff Alternatives Analysis Workshop for the California High-Speed Train (HST) Project Merced to Fresno Section. The Merced to Fresno Section of the California HST project is approximately 60 miles long. The limits are from the Merced HST Station south through the planned junction (wye) with the San Jose to Merced HST corridor to the west and then continuing south to Fresno.

In March 2009, three scoping meetings were held for this section, which originally included the Fresno – Bakersfield Section. The public scoping meetings for Merced – Fresno were held in Merced, Madera and Fresno. Additional agency scoping meetings were held in Chowchilla. Meetings with resource agencies were held in Sacramento and Merced. Other informal stakeholder meetings also were held. Since those scoping meetings in March, an amended Notice of Intent and Notice of Preparation were advertised that advised the public and affected agencies and stakeholders that the Merced – Bakersfield HST project was being divided into the Merced – Fresno and Fresno – Bakersfield projects. The public scoping period for the Merced – Fresno Section was extended. Many of the comments gathered at the meetings and during the original scoping period addressed alignment issues and proposed alignment alternatives and design options for consideration. The extended scoping period did not alter any of the alternatives being considered.

These comments were distilled to produce initial alignment alternatives and station and design options for consideration in an Initial Alternatives Analysis (AA) Report (June 2009). These initial alternatives were presented to federal, state and local agencies at

technical working group meetings, and public information meetings were conducted. Additional stakeholder meetings were also held, and the alignments and design options were refined based on the comments received. On June 23, 2009, a workshop with FRA and the Authority refined these alternatives further and several untenable alternatives were not carried forward in to the alternatives analysis process. There were four north-south alignments (A1 – A4) that were carried forward and evaluated in the alternatives analysis process. The four north-south alignments and the five alignments under study by the San Jose – Merced section created 20 possible junction (wye) configurations.

The alignments, wyes, station location and design options were then evaluated systematically using established Authority technical guidance and evaluation criteria. An alternatives analysis workshop with the FRA and Authority was conducted on October 13, 2009 to present information regarding the alternatives being studied. The purpose of the workshop was to obtain direction from the FRA/Authority staff on what alignments should be carried forward for more detailed environmental impact investigation and to discuss evaluation results and conclusions. The attached map and memo (with tables) summarize the results of that workshop, including which HST alignment alternatives, stations and design options should be carried forward into the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) process.

On the maps, each alignment alternative within the subsection is color-keyed to the key issue descriptions on the maps. Solid lines indicate alignment alternatives that were selected during the workshop to be carried forward into the EIR/EIS process. Dashed faded lines indicate the alignment alternatives that were evaluated and determined not to be carried forward.

The supporting detailed analysis of the alternatives and station and design options will be provided in the draft Alternatives Analysis report, which will be made available for public review later in December. The findings from this report will be presented to the general public and reviewed with public agencies at meetings in December 2009. Based on comments received, the report will then be refined and issued as a Final AA report.

### **Board Recommendation**

This is an informational item only.

### **Attachments:**

- Alignment map and summary memo of alternatives analysis evaluation criteria and results.